

NCA
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NEWS ANALYSIS NO. 1-0399
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LAW OF THE SEA AND THE U.S. CONGRESS

ANNCR:

CONGRESS IS MOVING CLOSER TO ENACTING LEGISLATION WHICH WOULD EXTEND THE PRESENT FISHERIES ZONE OFF UNITED STATES COASTS. NEWS ANALYST FRED GALVAN HAS THESE THOUGHTS.

VOICE:

THE BILL -- APPROVED BY A JOINT HOUSE-SENATE COMMITTEE THIS WEEK -- WOULD EXTEND THE PRESENT FISHERIES LIMIT FROM TWELVE TO TWO HUNDRED MILES. THE BILL, IF PASSED BY THE FULL CONGRESS AND SIGNED BY THE PRESIDENT, WOULD NOT GO INTO EFFECT FOR ANOTHER YEAR.

THE BILL REPRESENTS A COMPROMISE BETWEEN THE POSITIONS TAKEN BY THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE CONGRESS ON AN ISSUE THAT IS INCREASINGLY BOTHERING BOTH. IT CENTERS ON THE OVER-FISHING OF WATERS OFF AMERICA'S COASTS BY FLEETS OF FOREIGN TRAWLERS -- ON THE EAST COAST BY FISHING VESSELS MAINLY FLYING THE FLAGS OF THE SOVIET UNION, POLAND, AND OTHER EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES. ON THE WEST COAST, JAPANESE, SOVIET AND OTHER VESSELS ARE ALSO OVER-FISHING THE WATERS ADJACENT TO IT. THE OVER-FISHING IS CAUSING WHAT THE AMERICAN FISHERIES INDUSTRY CONSIDERS AN ALARMING DROP IN STOCKS OF CERTAIN SPECIES AS COD, HADDOCK, MACKEREL, FLOUNDER AND SUCH CRUSTACEANS AS SHRIMP, LOBSTERS AND CRAY-FISH. THIS OVER-FISHING IS SHARPLY REDUCING THE SUPPLIES THAT AMERICAN FISHERMEN CAN SELL THE HOUSEHOLDER, AND INEVITABLY RAISING THEIR PRICE -- THUS CONTRIBUTING TO NATIONAL INFLATION. AND IT ALSO CONTRIBUTES TO INTERNATIONAL INFLATION BY MAKING EXPORT PRICES HIGHER.

THE LEGISLATION NOW ENTERING ITS FINAL CHAPTER BEFORE ENACTMENT EXCLUDES MIGRATORY SPECIES SUCH AS TUNA, WHICH PASS THROUGH WATERS OFF AMERICA'S WEST COAST ON THEIR WAY SOUTH TO THE SEAS OFF PERU, ECUADOR AND CHILE. THESE THREE SOUTH AMERICAN NATIONS, ALONG WITH OTHERS OF LATIN AMERICA ALREADY CLAIM EXCLUSIVE FISHING JURISDICTION OVER THE TWO HUNDRED MILE ZONE OFF THEIR COASTS. SEVERAL AFRICAN NATIONS ALSO ALREADY MAKE SUCH CLAIMS, AND ICELAND IS CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN A DISPUTE WITH BRITAIN OVER ITS SIMILAR CLAIMS.

AT ANY RATE, THE CONGRESSIONAL ACTION ON THE AMERICAN TWO-HUNDRED MILE FISHERIES LIMIT IN NO WAY WILL HAMPER THE UNITED STATES DELEGATION'S WORK AT THE CURRENT LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE IN NEW YORK. ITS CHIEF DELEGATE, AMBASSADOR (T. VINCENT) LEARSON MADE THIS CLEAR AT A NEWS CONFERENCE YESTERDAY (THURSDAY.)

AMBASSADOR LEARSON POINTED OUT THAT THE CONGRESSIONAL BILL EMBODIES THE VERY PRINCIPLES WHICH A CONSENSUS OF THE CONFERENCE ALREADY HAS LARGELY ACCEPTED. THAT CONSENSUS WILL BE REFLECTED IN THE OVER-ALL CODE OF SEA LAW THAT THE NEW YORK MEETING IS DISCUSSING. AMBASSADOR LEARSON POINTED OUT THAT -- IN HIS WORDS -- "THE STRONGEST ADVOCATES OF THE BILL ARE THE SAME ONES WHO ARE STRONG SUPPORTERS OF THE CONFERENCE."

THAT STATEMENT SEEMS TO ASSURE ADMINISTRATION APPROVAL OF THE LEGISLATION. INDEED, PRESIDENT FORD HAS INDICATED THAT SUCH A BILL WOULD BE SIGNED BY HIM IF ITS EFFECTIVE DATE PROVIDED ENOUGH TIME FOR THE LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE TO COME UP WITH ITS OWN VERSION OF FISHERIES LIMITS FOR

ALL NATIONS. THE BILL WOULD AUTOMATICALLY EXPIRE IF AND WHEN
SUCH AN INTERNATIONAL LAW OF THE SEA TREATY IS CONCLUDED.

EFC/RCS